

GENERAL NOTES

SOME RANDOM NOTES ON MAMMALS OF MINNESOTA

Lutreola vison. Mink.—In the fall of 1920, a farmer living on the Jefferson Highway between Elk River and Big Lake, Sherburne County, found a mink on this road that had evidently been killed by an auto. This was on a cement paved road.

Mephitis sp. Skunk.—There seems to be more or less disagreement as to the skunk's ability to discharge its scent under difficulty. I have taken and helped to take about fifty skunks from their dens in the last seven years. All were taken out alive and about one-half without their discharging any scent. There seems to be one, and only one, way to handle them safely; that is, grasp both hind feet and the tail firmly in one hand and pull them from the hole until the head appears, then grasp them around the neck. As long as they are held in this manner they cannot discharge scent, if the hind legs and tail are held straight out behind and a steady pull is maintained to prevent the back from "humping." They may then be placed in a sack and carried in the hand with the sack hanging free. Do not let them touch the ground or bump them. I have never had one try to bite, but would not take any chance, as I have known of their biting, and the bite is no joke.

Marmota monax rufescens. Woodchuck.—It seems to be not generally known that woodchucks climb trees. This was quite a surprise to me as I never considered this worthy of making notes on. The only time that I can give any definite information on is as follows: In the summer of 1917, while building fence, I saw a woodchuck fifty feet up in a basswood tree. I remember this because I threw my hammer at it and the hammer lodged in a crotch of a limb on which the "chuck" was sitting and I had to climb the tree to get it.—BERNARD BAILEY, *Elk River, Minnesota*.

TREE-CLIMBING WOODCHUCKS

Mr. Harold St. John's article in the *Journal of Mammalogy* for November, on the tree-climbing woodchuck, came to me very much in the nature of a surprise. Years ago, as a boy, in Ontario County, New York, I repeatedly saw woodchucks "treed" by dogs, not infrequently to a height of at least ten feet, usually on the trunk of a tree of small diameter. Others with whom I used to discuss such experiences spoke of them as more or less commonplace. I had, therefore, assumed that while woodchucks were not arboreal by preference, they readily took refuge in small trees, when surprised at some distance from burrow or rock pile.—B. S. BOWDISH, *Demarest, N. J.*

THE SUBSPECIES OF WOODCHUCK IN VERMONT

In connection with an article by Harold St. John in the November, 1921, issue of the *Journal of Mammalogy*, there is pictured a woodchuck, photographed as it was climbing a tree, and under it is the name *Marmota monax preblorum*. The photograph was taken at Hartland, Vermont. Possibly this name was used because the subspecies of woodchuck mentioned is assigned to central Vermont

by A. H. Howell in his monograph, "Review of American Marmots," North American Fauna, No. 37, 1915.

A short time after the marmot "Fauna" appeared, I collected a number of woodchucks in Vermont and sent skins and skulls to Mr. Howell, who kindly examined them. He pronounced them all (seven, if I remember rightly) *Marmota monax rufescens* and remarked that some further revision of New England woodchucks would be necessary. In his review he writes that material from northern New England is lacking. The specimens sent Mr. Howell were from Rutland, from Ferrisburg, in the Champlain Valley, and two from Lunenburg on the east side of the state near the Canada line. There were none from Hartland and immediate vicinity but it is reasonable to suppose that the woodchucks there are the same as in Rutland, 35 miles away.—GEORGE L. KIRK, *Rutland, Vt.*

ANOTHER TREE-CLIMBING WOODCHUCK

The recent article by Mr. Harold St. John in the Journal of Mammalogy (II, No. 4, 1921, 207), concerning "A Tree-climbing Woodchuck" prompts me to relate my own experience with another tree-climbing individual in Iowa.

On July 2, 1914, while doing some field work to which I was assigned by the director of the Iowa Geological Survey three miles northwest of Waukon, Iowa, I disturbed an adult woodchuck (*Marmota monax monax*) which was feeding in an open pasture. Immediately the animal gave a sort of grunt and galloped toward a small white oak a short distance away. On arriving at the tree which was between eight and ten inches in diameter, it did not hesitate at all but climbed, without apparent difficulty, to the first limb which was at least eight feet above the ground. So great was my surprise that I stopped and stared at the woodchuck for a moment, then slowly walked toward the tree. The rodent partly lay across the lowermost limb eyeing me and breathing heavily after its exertion. After watching it for a few minutes, during which time it remained in the same position, I secured a heavy club and dispatched it by breaking its back so that the skull was left intact. The latter is preserved in the University Museum as accession no. 25697.

An examination of the greatly distended stomach revealed only clover, grass, and other vegetation. Unfortunately I did not secure a photograph of the animal. This species is very common in the driftless, hilly area of northeastern Iowa where it does considerable damage and as a consequence of which a vain effort is being made to control it through the bounty system.—DAYTON STONER, *University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.*

WOODCHUCKS CLIMB TREES

Mr. Harold St. John, in the November, 1921, issue of the Journal of Mammalogy relates the case of the woodchuck, *Marmota monax preblorum*, climbing a tree and shows a photograph as evidence. He seems to think that such an occasion is unique and farther states that he had difficulty in convincing people of the fact.

I can assure Mr. St. John that I have frequently seen woodchucks climb trees. Two or three incidents stand out vividly. When a boy on the farm at home I on two occasions stoned woodchucks out of trees where some farm dogs had chased them. As I recall, both of these chucks were small and immature, but a few years

ago I saw a very large one in the top of a black walnut, where it had also taken refuge from the dogs. While such cases may be uncommon, no doubt there are many other observers who have seen woodchucks climb trees.—CLEVELAND P. HICKMAN, *West Virginia University, Morgantown, W. Va.*

MORE TREE-CLIMBING WOODCHUCKS

The note in the November Journal of Mammalogy on a Tree-Climbing Wood-Chuck by Mr. Harold St. John recalls an experience of the past summer. I was engaged in listing the birds of the new Allegany State Park, Cattaraugus County, New York, when one day, July 16, 1921, I came upon a woodchuck (*Marmota monax prebloorum*) about ten feet up in a dogwood tree. I had not seen the animal climb there, and do not know whether it climbed there because of my approach or was already there when I approached. The tree was about six inches in diameter, and leaned somewhat to the south which was the downhill side. This tree was in the midst of a large sized patch of woodland, and a considerable distance from any open country. I tossed a few sticks at the animal expecting it to jump or run down the tree, but while it seemed frightened, it seemed also unwilling to leave the tree.

After this experience I asked others who lived in that vicinity the question "Have you ever seen a woodchuck climb a tree?" Almost invariably I got the answer "Yes," with a statement that they often did it to escape enemies. Returning to my home in southern Connecticut I tried the question on people in that vicinity with the answer that they had never heard of such a thing, most of them adding that woodchucks seldom were found near trees. From this experience I concluded that the tree-climbing habit in woodchucks is something that is decidedly local, belonging chiefly to animals that live in wooded regions, rather than to those that live in open country.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS, *Fairfield, Conn.*

THE TREE-CLIMBING HABITS OF WOODCHUCKS

In the Journal of Mammalogy for November, 1921, there is a photograph and an excellent description of a "Tree-Climbing Woodchuck." I did not know that it was considered unusual for woodchucks to climb trees, but some of my friends think it is.

As a boy and young man, I lived in the hilly region of southwestern Pennsylvania where woodchucks were very common, often becoming a nuisance. I now recall five instances of woodchucks climbing trees. They were all put up by dogs and I observed them in every case. The first live woodchuck that I ever saw was one that a big dog ran up a butternut tree that grew along the border of a woods. The chuck was not full grown, but it went to a height of about 15 feet. My oldest brother climbed the tree and shook it down. A few years later, I was one day walking with my father through a woods containing almost a pure stand of white oak trees. Our dog got between a woodchuck and its burrow and chased it up one of the trees. This oak was nearly two feet in diameter with no branches for nearly 30 feet. The chuck continued to the first stopping place, a large lateral branch or open fork. My father threw two or three stones at it, but failed to hit it. The animal kept looking down at the barking dog and as it did so, it began to shake and wobble and finally tumbled to the ground. This would indicate, to me, that woodchucks are not familiar with high climbing. This one

climbed higher than any other that came under my observation. When grown to manhood, I often went by the tree and estimated the height to which this woodchuck climbed to be at least 30 feet.

Another incident may be of interest. I had gone home from college to spend my vacation with my father. One night about 10 p.m. we heard two dogs in the woods barking as though they had something "treed." My brother and I went to investigate the matter and found the dogs against a steep hillside barking up a dogwood tree. In a fork about eight feet from the ground was a large woodchuck. The dogs had probably treed it sometime during the day and were now laying siege to it. They had the bark peeled from the tree and were doing their best to get the chuck down.

The last time that I saw a woodchuck up a tree was only a few years ago. I had spent the day in the woods collecting plants, and was returning home about sunset. On hearing our dog bark I went to the place and found a half grown woodchuck up a shagbark hickory tree. It was eight or ten feet from the ground and had secured itself back of one of the stiff, shaggy plates of the bark. From all appearances the dog had chased it up the tree sometime earlier in the day.

Where the burrows of woodchucks are along fences, it is quite a common sight to see the animals climbing the posts or rails, perhaps to sun themselves or to make observations. To avoid dogs they will climb trees if they cannot reach their burrows, or escape by some other means.—OLIVER P. MEDSGER, *Arlington, New Jersey.*

CONNECTICUT WOODCHUCK CLIMBS A TREE

In connection with the note on a tree-climbing woodchuck, vol. 2, p. 207, I write to say that my brother, F. C. White, saw a woodchuck climb a tree because frightened by his dog. He subsequently pointed out to me the limb to which the animal had clambered; it was about six feet up from the ground. This was at Hartford, Connecticut.—FRANCIS BEACH WHITE, *Concord, New Hampshire.*

NOTES ON A FEW MAMMALS AT MISSOULA, MONTANA, 1917-1918

Thomomys fuscus fuscus. Pocket gopher.—Mounds are abundant on the bunchgrass of the Bitterroot Valley and over the open slopes of the mountains; a few occur also among the cottonwoods. June 3, 1918, a few minutes past 4 p.m., a half-grown male was found running on the University campus lawn.

Citellus columbianus. Ground-squirrel.—Locally called "gopher." Abundant on the bunchgrass; common in yellow pines; and numerous in the chaparral brush on the mountain sides. In 1918 it was first seen April 10. In 13 adult females taken between May 4 and 16 on the slopes of Mount Sentinel for use in the zoological laboratory, embryos were found as follows: one with 3 embryos 22 mm. in length, as they lay rolled in the fetal membranes; one with 3 embryos 20 mm.; one with 3 embryos 16 mm.; one with 4 embryos 13 mm.; three with 4 embryos each, too small to measure.

Eutamias sp. Chipmunk.—Numerous in cottonwoods, in brush along the canyon streams, in yellow pines, and abundant on talus slopes. In 1917 last seen November 4, and in 1918 first noted April 7. May 19 one was noted eating dandelion seeds while seated on a rock pile at the edge of the cottonwood forest along Rattlesnake Creek. He would cut off a ripe head and then seating himself on a rock would

cut away one side of the head near the base and eat the seeds. He was quite wasteful, spilling many of the seeds on the ground. He apparently attempted to eat only the seeds, but I could not be sure whether or not he cut off the seed plumes, though I think he did.

Sciurus hudsonicus richardsoni. Richardson squirrel.—Few in yellow pines and in mixed yellow pines and Douglas spruces.

Castor canadensis canadensis. Beaver.—April 14, 1918, fresh cuttings were noted on cottonwoods along Rattlesnake Creek.

Lepus bairdii bairdii. Rocky Mountain snowshoe hare.—June 9, 1918, one was seen in Douglas spruce-western larch forest near Lo-lo Hot Springs.

Sylvilagus nuttallii nuttallii. Washington cottontail.—One was seen October 21, 1917, in brush along Rattlesnake Creek.—LEE R. DICE, *Museum of Zoology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.*

SILK BUFFALO ROBES

In the Journal for August, 1921, Mr. E. R. Warren of Colorado Springs, Colorado, asked for information in regard to a "silk buffalo" robe. Recently, while glancing through Volume 1 of Ernest Thompson Seton's "Life Histories of Northern Animals," I found the following: p. 250: "The 'Beaver robe' was a rich brown with very fine fur, of these not more than one in ten thousand was found." P. 283, quoted by Seton from C. E. Denny, *Forest and Stream*, May, 8, 1897, p. 362: "The robe was nearly always of a cow, very fine and very light. Many explanations were given by hunters for this peculiar coat, and the right one was no doubt that given by Montana Indians—that it was caused by the constant licking of many animals in the herd, to which some motherless calf belonged, it having become the pet of the band, the animals testifying their liking in that manner." Thinking this may interest other readers of the Journal, I am sending it on.—K. F. BASCOM, *Dept. of Zoology, University of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.*